

# The Pileup

## Newsletter of the CDXA

### ***Rwanda, Back on the Air—9X0R*** by Fabrizio “Brix” Vedovelli, IN3ZNR



**Team 9X0R brought us Rwanda during March, 2008. Fabrizio is pictured at the left end of the back row.**

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K8YC	John Scott	Editor

The seeds of the DXpedition to Rwanda were sown a long time ago, in mid 2006, when we returned home from our Western Sahara effort. Many emails went back and forth between me, Tony Gonzalez (EA5RM) and others talking about possibilities for our next trip. We chose to go to Rwanda. This particular DXCC entity attracted us for several reasons. The last big operation from there took place several years ago and it had moved up in rank to #45 on DX Magazine's “most wanted” list of DXCC entities. Moreover, after 14 years from the start of the terrible civil war there, the country was finally a quite peaceful place. For all these reasons, we believed Rwanda would be a wonderful adventure for our old “Desert Patrol” of Western Sahara. We were excited about the possibilities of our adventure, but the hardest obstacle was still in the middle of our road to success—yes, that little magic document called a “license”. After a lot of faxes, emails, and useless phone calls in January, Tony decided to

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The 9X0R DXpedition was supported by CDXA in 2008. This article was written by CDXA member Fabrizio Vedovelli (IN3ZNR) who was a member of the team. Fabrizio will be on the Galapagos Islands later this month with members of the same team which brought us 9X0R. See the article on his latest DXpedition elsewhere in this issue.

#### CDXA PacketCluster & Other Communication Systems

K4MD (AR V.4 Cluster via Telnet)	k4md.no-ip.com:23
K4MD (AR V.6 Cluster via Telnet)	k4md.no-ip.com:7373
W4DXA (AR V.6 Cluster via Telnet)	w4dx.no-ip.com:23
W3GQ (CC Cluster via Telnet)	w3gq.no-ip.com:7373
CDXA Repeater 147.18 MHz (+600 )	W4DXA, Near Fort Mill, SC
World Wide Web Homepage	www.cdxa.org
Wednesday Luncheon (11:30 AM)	Skyland Family Restaurant, 4544 South Boulevard, Charlotte, NC

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travel to Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. This decision was the key to our success! In fact, after a lot of meetings with the Rwandan officials and the collaboration of Peter Stabuch (9X5SP) and Colonel Diogene Mudenge (9X1AA) chief of RURA offices, EA5RM came back with the licenses for all of us, opening also the door for others. In the meantime, our group of amateur radio operators, with the help of RURA (Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency), would try to establish the Rwanda Amateur Radio Union (RARU) as National Amateur Society. Main RARU aims will be to promote Amateur Radio in Rwanda. For that reason, as part of our DXpedition, we planned on donating a transceiver to Kigali University as an aid to teaching and training new amateur radio operators and to help build a new amateur radio club. So, the good news from Rwanda coming to us in mid-January was that 9X0R was to become a reality. While Tony was still completing his efforts in Kigali, we decided to go there as soon as possible. In only two and a half months, we put together our team, prepared equipment, arranged accommodations and fulfilled the logistical needs for our twelve multinational operators.

The nucleus of the crew was to be the Western Sahara's veterans. We planned to have more CW operators for this DXpedition. We were aided in this decision by DXers everywhere. The survey of desired bands and modes completed by DXers using our website showed that you wanted contacts using digital modes and CW, and you wanted to work us on Low Bands, too. The operator team consisted of: Tony (EA5RM), Javier

(EA5KM), Bernard (F9IE), Javi (EC4DX), Gerard (EA3EXV), Manuel (EA7AJR), Dima (UY7CW), Robert (EA2RY), Manolo (EA4DRV), Ruben (EA5BZ), Gianfranco (I0ZY), and Fabrizio (IN3ZNR). Surprisingly, all these people were able to schedule themselves for a mid-March departure. With the offer of help from "Stepplr" antennas, we planned to set up at least three different shacks, possibly four. That became a reality when we finally arrived in Rwanda. We set up four operating positions: one each for CW, Phone, Digital, and the last one mixed modes. All four positions were furnished with 1 Kw amplifiers, because of the sponsorship by "SPE" of Rome, Italy. SPE loaned us the use of three brand new "Expert" 1K-FA (fully automatic), all solid state amplifiers, the smallest kilowatt on the market. Moreover, we were happy to have the owner of the SPE factory Gianfranco, I0ZY, as a member of the DXpedition.

Having Gianfranco along gave him an opportunity to see his product in hard use and it gave me the chance to occasionally speak with someone in my mother language, HI! Ninety percent of the operators were Spanish, so the "official" day-to-day language of crew was Spanish, while the Rwandan official language was incomprehensible to all of us. Another widely spoken language in Rwanda is French. Some people, specially the young people, understand some English. It can be very tiring to hear three different languages, then translate all in Spanish—all the while keeping a conversation going.

During February and early March, day by day our equipment list grew, and a mass of 300 kg of material was carried and stored in Madrid awaiting our departure date. Finally everything was ready to go. We all joined together the morning of 15 March in Brussels, Belgium. That same day, after an easy trip, the crew reached Kigali Airport in the late evening. The next day we had a long check out by Rwandan customs, and also a careful inspection of our transceivers by RURA (the FCC in Rwanda). By early afternoon everything cleared customs, and we were able to travel to the Akagera Lodge.

Our QTH was in the middle of beautiful Akagera Game Park, near the Tanzanian border. Being a small state, to reach Akagera was only a two hours drive on very good roads. The Lodge was on top of a hill, with beautiful paths in all 360 degrees. A

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## The Pileup

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The purpose of the Association is to secure for the members the pleasures and benefits of associating with persons having a common interest in Amateur Radio.

Members of the CDXA shall adhere to "The Amateur's Code" as published from time to time in *The ARRL Handbook for Radio Amateurs*, and shall consist of those valid licensed amateur operators having an interest in promoting amateur radio. Long distance communications (DX) is of special interest to members of the Association, but said interest is not a requirement of membership.

Yearly dues are \$25.00. A second licensed Amateur family member living in the same household can join for \$5.00 for a total family price of \$30.00 per year. The total price for 3 or more licensed family members living in the same household is only \$35.00 per year. All family members enjoy full member status. Dues are payable annually in December by check to the Secretary/Treasurer:

Ray Weeks, N4APR  
3017 Cutchin Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28210

Address, telephone, and email address changes should be directed to the Secretary/Treasurer at the above address or via email at: [rweeks1@carolina.rr.com](mailto:rweeks1@carolina.rr.com).

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real dream location for hams! Moreover, our elevation was about 5600 feet above sea level, so luckily not a mosquito was seen. Before darkness fell, (as planned), we were already active with two stations on the air with one yagi and one vertical at full power.



**Did we forget anything? This veteran team arriving at the door of the Akagera Lodge was confident they had considered every need.**

After the first CQ, "9X0R, QRZ", we were suddenly faced with immense pileups. It seemed as though the world was awaiting us! The pileups continued to be large for the first days. The number of callers were more than we ever imagined, suggesting Rwanda was higher than number 45 on the list. Shift after shift we operated almost all night long on the first night, although we were very tired from the trip and the station installation duties. Early the second morning, all the crew not involved in their shift at radios, were working hard to finish the antenna set up. Two more yagis, the verticals (Biglr by Steppir) and other verticals—inverted "L" for 80 and 160 meters were erected in one day and half. Weather was mostly overcast because we were at the beginning of the rainy season. So luckily the antenna job was not unusually hot, but we had a strong rain beat on us for an hour or two. After that rain, the equatorial sun at a high altitude was burning our skin.

With very good pass band filters we were able to keep three (and very often four) bands on different modes on the air at the same time. After some troubles in the first days, we were able to upload

our website with our log data. We used a very complete logging system which has been used by several recent DXpeditions. It is rich with interesting statistics for the DXer as "how many contact with" for mode, for countries, or CQ zone. Perhaps this kind of "classified result for DXers", increases the pile-up for different modes or bands not even really needed for DXCC. Our goals were: to work many North American and Asian hams; to use CW and digital modes longer than phone; and to increase low band contacts. For these reasons, we paid attention to the Americas whenever the propagation would help us. Moreover, we were on the air very often with two stations on CW, one in digital and only the last on phone. We reached our goals for the first two targets. For low bands, unfortunately, we discovered what many have come to call "Equatorial noise". Almost all nights some stormy weather with thunder and lightning filled 80 meters and 160 meters with a lot of scratches and crackling. The third day we set up a "beverage" to USA and EU, and this helped our top band specialist pick more stations out of the noise. I guess we got a little too far into the rainy season. December and January would be the better months on the Equator for the Low Bands.



**Fabrizio checks out the action on the bands.**

Accommodations and meals were good enough for the team, but we were always tired. Keeping three stations on the air 24 hours a day with only 12 operators is very hard work! There were very few guests in the Lodge, apart from monkeys! Yes, a group of "baboons" were always using the

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garden of the Lodge, as a playground. Our antennas were there, and one morning, two monkeys were jumping over our beverage playing with wires. I screamed a lot to scare the group but was not always successful.

Our target number of QSOs was at least 60,000. We did it, reaching 62,300. The last day and night we had a lot of power line failures. I believe that without these failures, our grand total of QSOs would have been at least 5,000 greater. Luckily this happened only at the end of operation. If it had happened in the first days, our morale and mood would not have been nearly as good. But the big pileups kept our energy high to serve the deserving.

When on the airplane on the road back home, we already began talking about our next steps. Stay tuned, a new DXpedition with the "Cuadrilla" is on the way! In the name of the 9X0R team I want to thank all the sponsors that helped us go to Rwanda, and particularly Gary Dixon and officers of INDEXA and the members of CDXA for their support.

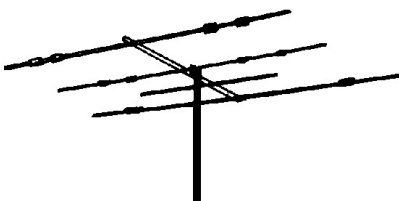
See you in the next pile-up!

*Fabrizio*, IN3ZNR

### CDXAer to activate Galapagos Islands

Look for CDXA Member Fabrizio "Brix" Vedovelli, (IN3ZNR) to be among the DX Friends ([www.dxfriends.com](http://www.dxfriends.com)) operating as HD8R on the Galapagos Islands from 24 October through 8 November. DX Friends is a team that Brix has joined on many DXpeditions that have brought the DX community DXpeditions from Western Sahara, Rwanda, Palestine, San Marino, South Sudan, Andorra, Sovereign Military Order of Malta, San Andres, Niger, Congo, and Morocco.

Brix mostly operates on SSB on these DXpeditions, so say hello to him when you work HD8R.



### DX King Race Continues

The DX King yearlong contest continues to attract a few stalwart competitors. This relatively unstructured "contest" runs throughout the year. Points are determined by the total number of unique entities and CQ Zones worked throughout the year using *any* mode desired. It is a good way to measure one's DX activity on an annual basis. No confirmations are required. DX King is a mirror of the CQ Marathon, with final DX King scoring being confirmed by the approved scoring done by the CQ Marathon Contest Manager.

The bonus for any DX King competitor is that *any* CDXA member with a confirmed point count of 150 or more is entered into a drawing for a nice prize. Thus, anyone meeting the 150 point total may be a winner!! But a competitor **MUST** also make an entry in CQ Marathon to have his score counted for DX King. Scores are due for the CQ Marathon by about the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the new year, so don't forget to make a timely entry to CQ Magazine to also be in the running for DX King.

Callsign	Reported	Class	Entities	Zones	Total
K5EK	Sep	Lim	237	40	277
K4ZO	Sep	Unlim	234	40	274
K3WA	Sep	Unlim	194	40	234
W4PNY	Sep	Unlim	193	40	233
K7BV	Feb	Unlim	191	40	231
W3GQ	Sep	Unlim	184	40	224
KZ2I	Aug	Unlim	182	40	222
W4HG	Sep	Unlim	177	39	216
W7DO	Sep	Unlim	175	40	215
W1AJT	Jul	Unlim	171	38	209
K8YC	Sep	Unlim	170	39	209
N4PQX	May	Unlim	165	40	205
VE3UTT	Jul	Unlim	140	39	179
AA4R	Apr	Lim	142	36	178
W3OA	Mar	Unlim	111	30	141
W4CWA	Sep	Unlim	87	26	113

## “Hitting the High Spots” – a sequel

In the July/August 2021 issue of the PILEUP, there was an article on “Hitting the High Spots” which discussed some of the tools available for a Rover to identify and actually view the vista available at a potential operating point without ever leaving the comfort of your home QTH.

The article also identified some of the hidden “gotchas” (a barricaded road!) that won’t show up on the somewhat static tools discussed. And, there are other pitfalls that might befall the ardent Rover. One such setback was identified by Paul Ponak, AD4IE, shortly after the last issue appeared. What follows is Paul’s discussion of that event.

On 7/31/2021 1:57 PM, Paul Ponak wrote:

John, I read your article “Hitting the High Spots”, and it brought to mind one of those life and/or death experiences that I had on a SOTA activation some time ago. I was going from Mount Jefferson to the Mount Jefferson Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway (the overlook is actually a SOTA mountain #3730) and the program that I used for my route took me to a short cut that I will never take again. There was a barricade off to the side of a small road that I was to take with no sign on it and it did not block the lane so I figured it had something to do with work they were doing during the week (this was a weekend).

As I drove up the dirt road, which became quite steep, I saw it narrowing. Then it ended. It ended because the road was washed away to my front and both sides with deep drops in the three directions. My truck was sitting on an area that was so small that I couldn’t see behind me well enough to back down. I had to open the door on the driver’s side and hold on to the post between the front and back doors so I could get a look at which way I had to back down. There was no ground below me as I did this (well, there was . . . but it was way, way down!) as I hung out the door. I had to do this several times going back and forth till I could finally back down to a side road and turn around.

I have no idea if the road was ever rebuilt. I don’t know how it could be done. I’m never going to find out, because I’ll take the longer route this Fall when I activate these two summits again.

Just thought I’d pass this on. Thanks for the article showing that going mobile has its exciting and sometimes harrowing moments.

--Paul, AD4IE

So, fellow hams, choose your sites and routes as carefully as you can. And when things look like they are getting out of hand, retrace your steps—carefully!

## Time will Tell the Story

VHF contests can be dicey affairs. If you’ve spent some time on the VHF/UHF bands, you’ll notice that unlike the seemingly global effect the sun has on propagation on the HF bands, the VHF/UHF bands are more controlled by things such as “E Skip”, Auroral Scattering or Tropospheric Ducting. These are more subtle propagation effects that are rooted in solar activity that affect the Ionospheric E Layer or affect the heated layers of the troposphere. The net result can be a boon to certain portions of the USA geography and a bust to other parts of the USA. Despite the rather high population density of the East Coast of the USA—and related ham population—if the E-skip or Tropo Ducting is strong across the central USA, hams in central USA can work lots of stations both east and west of them and overcome many of the advantages generally afforded the densely populated Northeast. During such “openings” East Coast and West Coast teams can try as they might yet not turn a score good enough to surpass those operating in central USA.

Roger Webb, W4MW, is an ardent VHF/UHF aficionado who was a CDXA member for many years. He participates in VHF contests using his own callsign as well as being a member of the AA4ZZ Contest team. His lengthy time operating on VHF makes him somewhat of a “guru” for predicting VHF propagation. In the recent ARRL September VHF Contest, a few days before the weekend, Roger looked at the lineup of the high pressure systems to be over the entire East Coast on the weekend and cautiously stated he thought there was likely to be good “tropo” propagation and possibly some “E-Skip” on the coming weekend. It seems to have been an accurate prediction based on early scores reported on the 3830 Scores site. This author will not “jinx” the fine effort of the AA4ZZ team by making any victory predictions. Let’s just say they had a fine outing that made all participants happy about their effort. Time will tell the story.



## Just Around the Corner . . . .

By John Scott, K8YC

The next solar cycle appears to be heating up nicely if my progress in the DX King competition is any indication. After the “easy ones” were in the log in the first few months of the year, progress began to slow. Despite a respectable number of entities being in my log at the beginning of September, solar flux numbers seemed to climb in the 90 to 100 range in September adding 10 points in one month. Late in September, I put 3B9FR from Rodriguez Island in my log. His QRZ.COM entry indicated that he had permanently gone QRT. Had he noticed the fun was back?

After a short vacation in early October, I found some “chatter” in my email inbox indicating that a number of other CDXA members experienced some fine working conditions in the first full week of October. What did I miss? On the first day back on the air, I found a SFI of 90 and was able to put four new entities in my DX King log for 2021 in one day (two CW, one SSB, and one FT8)! Clearly hams all around the world are getting aroused by the improving conditions and are coming back on the air. I’ve noticed an increase in announced DXpeditions, also. Hey, Ladies and Gents, it’s time to fire up that rig and have some fun.

### Pileup Editor Needed

The Pileup needs a new editor for the upcoming election of officers. If you’ve ever had yen to produce the written word, here’s your chance. Please contact President Paul Trotter to indicate your willingness to serve.

Your current editor has produced the newsletter for 16 years of CDXA’s existence. It is time for a new energy source to pick up the editor’s pen.

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## The Back Page

To whet your appetite for the coming “good times” in radio propagation, your editor has activated the Way Back machine to bring you a report on the **9X0R DXpedition to Rwanda** in March 2008. A member of that DXpedition, which was also sponsored by the Carolina DX Association, was fellow CDXA member Fabrizio “Brix” Vedovelli. It is noteworthy that Brix will be on an upcoming DXpedition to Galapagos Islands operating as HD8R later this month! He’ll be with members of the DX Friends team which brought us 9X0R way back when. See Page 1.

A DXpedition to **Galapagos Islands** will occur starting 24 October. “Brix” Vedovelli (IN3ZNR)--our Italian connection--will be there. See Page 4.

DX King 2021 is perking along nicely with assistance from some recent good propagation. There is still time to earn 150 points and get in on the raffle draw. Page 4.

Sometimes **hitting the high spots** has its drawbacks. Read what Paul Ponak (AD4IE) found. Page 5.

Predicting VHV/UHF propagation is an art and a science. Did Roger Webb “nail it”? Time will tell. See Page 5.

**EDITOR NEEDED.** Apply to CDXA’s President. Page 6.